

NEWS RELEASE

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MICHIGAN WORKS! KENT & ALLEGAN COUNTIES NAMES 2009 ESSENTIAL SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

Awards program honors employees who perform essential services most people take for granted.

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., September 28, 2009 — Michigan Works! Kent & Allegan Counties revealed the winners of the second annual Essential Service Awards today during an Economic Club Meeting featuring keynote speaker Bill Strickland president-CEO of Manchester Bidwell Corporation. The Essential Service Awards recognize people working indispensable, but traditionally, undervalued jobs and the important role these certain workers play in our economy.

“These workers are essential to a smoothly running business, organization and community,” said Win Irwin, chairman of the board for Michigan Works! Kent & Allegan Counties. “Yet, as a group, this segment of workers has become virtually invisible in our society. The goal of the Essential Service Awards is to help raise awareness, and appreciation, of these essential workers.”

2009 Essential Service Award Winners:

Sandra Cihak – Waste-to-Energy Facility of Kent County

Nonprofit/Government Category

“Sandra has been a County employee for 23 years, serving as a scalehouse attendant at the Kent County Waste-to-Energy facility. She has the respect of the drivers and exhibits professionalism at all times. She is an excellent employee and person.”

Bob Rouse – Kent Intermediate School District

Cleaning/Housekeeping/Groundskeeping Category

“Friendly, responsive and dependable, many of us at Kent ISD count on Bob whenever we have evening meetings, workshops and events. His follow-through is second to none, and he ALWAYS goes that extra mile.”

Talaya Pratt – Gerald R. Ford Job Corps Center

Foodservice Category

“Talaya’s pride and passion for her job is admirable. She has also been called ‘a beacon of hope’ for students and staff alike, taking extra time and energy to serve as a positive role model and mentor for young people she encounters.”

Randy Schmitt – Allied Waste Services

General Labor Category

“Randy has a very positive attitude and displays such pride in his job. He’s quick, methodical, friendly and courteous. I often wonder how lovely the whole world would be if everyone worked in a manner as filled with excellence and pride as Randy.”

Sandra Ogren – Caledonia YMCA Child Care Center

Childcare Category

“Sandra is constantly asking what more she can do to help other staff members. Her positive attitude and willingness to go above and beyond is rare to find. Parents always ask if Sandra is coming back next year—the little ones just love her!”

Melissa Miller – Allegan County Transportation

Transportation Category

“Melissa is dependable, takes excellent care of her passengers and displays a wonderful attitude every day. Melissa is regularly chosen to train new drivers because she offers such a great example of what day-to-day service ethic is all about.”

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Essential Service Awards – Page 2 of 2

Missy Bieber – Owen-Ames-Kimball

Clerical Support Category

“Missy offers a perfect example of what it takes to be named the ‘Vice President of First Impressions.’ Clients continuously point out how pleasant it is to have someone with such a sunny disposition greet them at the door.”

Gordon Noggles – The Village Market

Retail Category

“Customers are constantly impressed with Gordon’s positive attitude and willingness to assist others with their groceries in the rain, snow, blazing heat or bitter cold. Not a day goes by that his warm smile doesn’t brighten the day of the people around him.”

Alfreda Graves – Home Care Staffing Services

Healthcare Category

“Alfreda continuously goes beyond her job description when caring for patients. Alfreda treats her patients with dignity and sensitivity that helps improve their quality of life and sense of worth.”

Claudia Place – Grand Rapids Children Museum

Hospitality Category

“Claudia was chosen because she has been a “rock” for the museum during these challenging economic times, stepping up and filling many leadership roles. Also, her baked goods are out of this world and should be up for an award as well!”

Nominations for the Essential Service Awards were received from both employers and the community at large in a variety of categories, including hospitality, retail, healthcare, transportation, clerical support, food service, general labor, childcare, nonprofit/government, custodial, housekeeping or groundskeeper. Criteria for the awards are based on the work attitude and ethic, and work history.

About Michigan Works! Kent & Allegan Counties

Michigan Works! Kent & Allegan Counties provides a network of employment and training programs and services for employers, employees, and job seekers with the goal of creating a sustained workforce with the required skills to maintain and enhance the economy of Kent and Allegan Counties.

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